
Occasional PAPERS.

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM DODD, LL.D.

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OCCASIONAL
P A P E R S,

BY THE LATE
WILLIAM DODD, LL.D.



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WHAT is to be expected in the following papers their titles sufficiently indicate. The interest taken by the Public in the sentence of the unfortunate man to whom they relate, naturally produced this publication.

He that commits these papers to the press, desires not to be considered as approving or condemning. He means to gratify

gratify the honest curiosity of the reader, and hopes that his curiosity may end in useful meditation.

The papers are printed without any alteration except the omission of a few words in one of the letters, which had a personal reference, and which therefore it was proper to suppress.

The most important of these pieces is the criminal's account of himself, which one of his friends advised him to have dilated more; but the day of execution was approaching, and he may be easily forgiven if he left his story imperfect.— He had, we ought to hope, other employment.

Dr.

Dr. DODD's Account of Himself.

THE greatest affliction and oppression to my mind at present is, the piercing reflection that I, who have lived all my life in an endeavour to promote the truth of Christianity, should now become an obstacle to that truth, and a scandal to that profession :---that I, who have with all my power, and with all sincerity, laboured to do good, and to be a blessing to my fellow creatuaes, should now become an evil and a curse. What shall I---can I--ought I to do, to prevent, as much as in me lies, any such dreadful consequences of my shame and my crime? Will a public attestation to my sincere belief of Christianity, and an ingenuous detail and confession of my offences, be of any avail?---In order to do this, and to acquaint you in few words with a perfect knowledge of myself, (tho' I should wish to do it more fully) be so good as to consider the few following particulars.

I entered

I entered very young on public life, very innocent---very ignorant---and very ingenuous. I lived many happy years at West Ham, in an uninterrupted and successful discharge of duty. A disappointment in the living of that parish obliged me to look out, and I engaged for a chapel near Buckingham Gate. Great success attended the undertaking: it pleased and elated me. At the same time Lord Chesterfield, to whom I was personally unknown, offered me the care of his heir, Mr. S---. By the advice of my dear friend, now in heaven, Dr. Squire, I engaged under promises which were not performed. Such a distinction too, you must know, served to increase a young man's vanity. I was naturally led into more extensive and important connections, and, of course, into greater expences, and more dissipations. Indeed, before, I never dissipated at all---for many, many years, never seeing a playhouse, or any public places, but living entirely in Christian duties. Thus brought to town, and introduced to gay life, I fell into its snares.

snare. Ambition and vanity led me on. My temper, naturally chearful, was pleased with company; naturally generous, it knew not the use of money: it was a stranger to the useful science of œconomy and frugality; nor could it withhold from distress, what it too much (often) wanted itself.

Besides this, the habit of uniform, regular, sober piety, and of watchfulness and devotion, wearing off, amidst this unavoidable scene of dissipation, I was not, as at West Ham, the innocent man that I lived there. I committed offences against my God! which yet, I bless him, were always, in reflection, detestable to me.

But my greatest evil was expence. To supply it I fell into the dreadful and ruinous mode of raising money by annuities. The annuities devoured me. Still I exerted myself by every means to do what I thought right, and built my hopes of perfect extrication from all my difficulties when my

B

young

young and beloved pupil should come of age. But, alas! during this interval, which was not very long, I declare with solemn truth, that I never varied from the steady belief of the Christian doctrines; I preached them with all my power, and kept back nothing from my congregations which I thought might tend to their best welfare, and I was very successful in this way during the time. Nor, though I spent in dissipation many hours which I ought not, but to which my connections inevitably led, was I idle during this period: my Commentary on the Bible, my Sermons to Young Men, and several other publications, prove it. I can say too with pleasure, that I studiously employed my interest, through the connections I had, for the good of others. I never forgot or neglected the cause of the distressed; many, if need were, could bear me witness. Let it suffice to say, that during this period I instituted the charity for the discharge of debtors.

Such is the plain and ingenuous detail of myself. I sincerely lament all I have done wrong. I love, and ever did, religion and goodness. I hate and abhor vice, and myself for ever having committed any. I look with peculiar detestation on the crime to which I am at present obnoxious; and I wish before I die, of all things, if it be possible, to make amends---by the most sincere and full confession and humiliation of myself.

W D

The

The following DECLARATION Dr. DODD inclosed in a letter to a friend some time before he suffered.

THOUGH I acknowledge in all its atrocity, and more especially with a view to my peculiar circumstances and character, the offence for which I suffer;---yet, considering that it is punished with such sanguinary severity in no commercial state under heaven; and that in my case it has been fully atoned for, so far as human creatures can atone to each other; I cannot but judge my punishment rather hard:---and still more so, as that Public (for whose benefit and example such ignominious death and punishment can alone be intended) has with a pleading, and almost unanimous voice, supplicated the throne, in the most humble manner, to shew mercy, and avert the abhorred stroke, by assigning another, though perhaps not less afflictive punishment.

In

In this dispensation, however, I look far beyond the hand of poor human vengeance, and adore the justice and goodness of God, who correcting me in judgement for deviations from the purity of his Gospel, as a distinguished minister of it, has been pleased to call me thus by death to proclaim my repentance, and to attest my faith in Him; and to declare to all my fellow creatures, and to my beloved countrymen in particular, (for whose love to me I am under the highest obligations) my firm belief of the principles which I have long preached, and in my writings delivered, with the utmost truth and sincerity, and which I thus seal with my blood, in perfect resignation to the will of my adorable Master, and in a firm dependance on those principles for the salvation of my own soul.

WILLIAM DODD.

LET-

LETTERS to two noble Lords
of his Majesty's most honourable
Privy Council.

L E T T E R I.

MY LORD,

I HAVE committed a capital crime, for which the sentence of the law has passed upon me; and whether that sentence shall be executed in its full rigour, may perhaps depend upon the suffrage of your Lordship.

The shame and self-reproach with which I now solícite your commiseration, I hope no man will ever feel who has not deserved to feel them like myself. But I will not despair of being heard with pity, when, under the terrors of a speedy and disgraceful death, I most humbly implore your Lordship's intercession.

My

My life has not been wholly useless; I have laboured in my calling diligently and successfully; but success enflamed my vanity, and my heart betrayed me. Violent passions have exposed me to violent temptations, but I am not the first whom temptation has overthrown. I have, in all my deviations, kept right always in view, and have invariably resolved to return to it. Whether, in a prosperous state, I should have kept my resolution, public justice has not suffered me to know.

My crime has been indeed atrocious, but my punishment has not been light. From a height of reputation which perhaps raised envy in others, and certainly produced pride in myself, I have fallen to the lowest and grossest infamy; from an income which prudence might have made plentiful, I am reduced to live on those remains of charity which infamy has left me.

When so much has been given to justice, I humbly intreat that life, such as it must now be, may be given to mercy; and that your Lordship's influence may be employed in disposing our Sovereign to look with compassion on,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

June 11,
1777.

Most humble Suppliant,

WILLIAM DODD.

L E T-

LETTER II.

MY LORD,

NOT many days are now to pass before the fate of one of the most miserable of human beings will be finally determined. The efficacy of your Lordship's voice is well known; and whether I shall immediately suffer an ignominious death, or wander the rest of my days in ignominious exile, your opinion will probably determine. Do not refuse, my Lord, to hear the plea, whatever it may be, which I humbly oppose to the extremity of justice.

I acknowledge, my Lord, the atrociousness of my crime; I admit the truth of the verdict that condemned me; yet I humbly hope, that when my evil is censured, my good may likewise be remembered; and that it may be considered how much that society, which is injured by my fraud, has been benefited by my charitable labours.---

C

I have

I have offended ; I am penitent ; I entreat but for life, for a life which must pass certainly in dishonour, and probably in want. Do not refuse, my Lord, to compassionate a man who, blasted in fame, and ruined in fortune, yet shrinks with terror from the precipice of eternity. Let me live, however miserable ; and let my miseries warn all those to whom they shall be known, against self-indulgence, vanity, and profusion.

Once more, my Lord, let me beg for life ; and when you see me going from the gloom of a prison to the penury of banishment, do not consider public justice as wholly unsatisfied by the sufferings of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

June 11,
1777.

Most humble Supplicant,

WILLIAM DODD.

To

[Dr. DODD's Petition presented by his Brother.]

To the KING's Most Excellent
Majesty.

S I R,

IT is most humbly represented to your
Majesty by William Dodd, the unhappy
convict now lying under sentence of death:

That William Dodd, acknowledging the
justice of the sentence denounced against
him, has no hope or refuge but in your
Majesty's clemency:

That though to recollect or mention the
usefulness of his former life, or the efficacy
of his ministry, must overwhelm him, in
his present condition, with shame and sor-
row, he yet humbly hopes that his past
labours will not wholly be forgotten; and
that the zeal with which he has exhorted
others to a good life, though it does not
extenuate his crime, may mitigate his pu-
nishment:

C 2

That

That debased as he is by ignominy, and distressed as he is by poverty, scorned by the world, and detested by himself, deprived of all external comforts, and afflicted by consciousness of guilt, he can derive no hopes of longer life, but that of repairing the injury he has done to mankind, by exhibiting an example of shame and submission, and of expiating his sins by prayer and penitence.

That for this end he humbly implores from the clemency of your Majesty the continuance of a life legally forfeited; and of the days which by your gracious compassion he may yet live, no one shall pass without a prayer, that your Majesty, after a long life of happiness and honour, may stand, at the day of final judgment, among the merciful that obtain mercy.

So fervently prays the most distressed and wretched of your Majesty's subjects,

WILLIAM DODD,

[Mrs.

[Mrs. DODD's Petition presented by herself.]

To the QUEEN's Most Excellent
Majesty.

MADAM,

IT is most humbly represented by Mary
Dodd, the wife of Dr. William Dodd,
now lying in prison under sentence of
death :

That she has been the wife of this unhappy man more than twenty-seven years, and has lived with him in the greatest happiness of conjugal union, and the highest state of conjugal confidence :

That she has therefore been a constant witness of his unwearied endeavours for public good, and his laborious attendance on charitable institutions. Many are the families whom his care has delivered from want ; many are the hearts which he has freed from pain, and the faces which he has cleared from sorrow :

That

That therefore she most humbly throws herself at the feet of the Queen, earnestly entreating that the petition of a distressed wife asking mercy for a husband, may be considered as naturally soliciting the compassion of her Majesty; and that when her wisdom has compared the offender's good actions with his crime, she will be pleased to represent his case to our most gracious Sovereign in such terms as may dispose him to mitigate the rigour of the law.

So prays your Majesty's most dutiful
subject and suppliant,

MARY DODD.

Such

Such were the last thoughts of a man whom we have seen exulting in popularity, and sunk in shame. For his reputation, which no man can give to himself, those who conferred it are to answer. Of his public ministry the means of judging were sufficiently attainable. He must be allowed to preach well, whose sermons strike his audience with forcible conviction. Of his life, those who thought it consistent with his doctrine, did not originally form false notions. He was at first what he endeavoured to make others, but the world broke down his resolution, and he in time ceased to exemplify his own instructions.

Let those who are tempted to his faults, tremble at his punishment; and those whom he impressed from the pulpit with religious sentiments, endeavour to confirm them, by considering the regret and self-abhorrence

abhorrence with which he reviewed in prison his deviations from rectitude.

Whatever assistance his anxiety might prompt him to solicit in forming the petitions, (which, however, he must be considered as confirming by his name,) the account of his past life, and of his dying sentiments, are the effusions of his own mind, consigned to paper without a prompter, and copied from his manuscript. Those who read them with the proper disposition, will not read in vain.



